

Approved For Release 10/3/2017 : CIA-RDP97S00975A003600500001-6

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28 April 1958

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Copy No. 140

CENTRAL

INTELLIGENCE

BULLETIN



DOCUMENT NO. 50

NO CHANGE IN CLASS.

11 DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS ^{SC}

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010

AUTH: MR 702

DATE: 3/15/18 REVIEWER:

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State Dept. review completed

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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

ok

Nasir's trip to the USSR: Plans for Nasir's scheduled 19-day visit to the Soviet Union starting 29 April appear to call for a considerable amount of negotiation, mostly economic, as well as a tour of selected points in the USSR. The negotiators who will accompany Nasir are competent, relatively conservative economic experts who are wary of further commitments to the Soviet bloc. However, for political reasons, Nasir might feel unable to refuse a spectacular new Soviet offer.

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ok

United Arab Republic: Nasir is seriously concerned over the poor Syrian grain harvest. The lack of an exportable surplus will put strains on the UAR budget and embarrass Nasir politically. Egypt, which had expected to import Syrian wheat, will probably be forced to seek additional supplies abroad, possibly from the USSR.

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no

Algeria - France: The call by European extremist demonstrators in Algiers on 26 April for an "army solution" to the crisis in Paris probably reflects their conviction

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that the trend in France has turned against them. There are renewed rumors of an imminent attempt at a coup d'état looking to the establishment of Algeria as an independent state. A coup attempt would involve French residents and some elements of the army in Algeria. While the success of such a move is doubtful, the idea of a coup would have increased appeal if a government favoring a negotiated settlement of the Algerian problem came to power in Paris.

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III. THE WEST

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yes

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yes
Guatemala - British Honduras: President Ydígoras is prepared to carry out a strong propaganda campaign to promote the idea of Guatemalan sovereignty over neighboring British Honduras. His primary motive is to strengthen his domestic political position by taking a strong stand on an issue with emotional appeal to all Guatemalans. He threatens a series of dramatic gestures, including an appeal in the United Nations for Latin American solidarity against "colonialism."

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

(No back-up material)

II. ASIA-AFRICA

Nasir's Trip to Moscow

UAR President Nasir has stated that his trip to Moscow, scheduled to begin on 29 April for 18 or 19 days, will be devoted largely to "reassuring" the USSR, in view of his recent moves against pro-Soviet elements in Syria. However, Nasir

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[redacted] hopes to reorganize the separate Egyptian and Syrian economic and arms deals and perhaps obtain an increase in "basic economic aid." He may also attempt to secure Soviet agreement to provide hard currency for Egyptian cotton, to reduce the cost of arms already ordered, and to furnish jet aircraft for his civil airline.

Nasir apparently expects to do some hard bargaining, and the inclusion of the relatively conservative Egyptian ministers of finance and economy in his retinue suggests he may attempt to avoid extensive further commitments. The fact that no military personnel will accompany the group seems to rule out significant new arms purchases.

Nevertheless, the USSR may offer economic assistance on large-scale new projects which would tempt Nasir. Such an offer might consist of Soviet underwriting of the development plans for the Suez Canal, large-scale agricultural improvement schemes, or even financing Nasir's pet project, the Aswan Dam. A sizable contingent of UAR newspaper and radio men accompanying Nasir will guarantee propaganda coverage for home consumption, and any agreement made, regardless of its real magnitude, will be publicized as another victory for "positive neutralism."

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Poor Syrian Grain Crop Worries Nasir

The prospective small size of the Syrian grain harvest, resulting from drought, is worrying UAR President Nasir and may embarrass him politically by coming so soon after the Syrian-Egyptian union. Although it is believed there will be sufficient wheat for Syrian domestic consumption, the anticipated absence of normal supplies for export will result in an important loss of foreign exchange. It will also force Egypt, which had expected to rely on Syrian wheat for part of its consumption, to seek additional supplies abroad, possibly from the Soviet Union.

A temporary prohibition of grain exports, as well as statements by officials in the Syrian Ministry of Economy that there will be no domestic shortage, will probably result in grain dealers holding supplies off the market in anticipation of higher prices later in the year. A rise in grain prices could cause a serious loss of Nasir's prestige in Syria and nullify the effect of his recent decree cutting the price of bread, the staple of Syrian diet.

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Sources:

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Guatemalan President to Wage Campaign For Sovereignty
Over British Honduras

Guatemalan President Ydigoras told a group of British friends on 24 April he will "use all means" to extend Guatemalan sovereignty to British Honduras and is prepared to "spend millions" to this end. He apparently has in mind a concerted effort to gain the support of all Latin American countries and may carry the issue to the United Nations. An armed invasion of the colony is unlikely, however, as the President seems to realize that such action would have disastrous results.

In an attempt to dramatize the issue, Ydigoras made one unsuccessful attempt to visit the colony on 16 April and now says he will make a second try, this time by sea. He will ask permission in advance, but if it is denied, he intends to go anyway and will also levy a 100-percent duty on British goods entering Guatemala.

All recent Guatemalan governments have used the claim to British Honduras--based on old Spanish territorial claims--to rally domestic support to their regimes. Ydigoras, who lacks wide and well-organized political support, is probably similarly motivated. He seems, however, more determined than his predecessors and his penchant for the dramatic grandstand play could carry him to a point where it would be difficult to back down.

The dispute also involves Mexico, which claims the northern part of the colony if Britain should accede to Guatemalan demands. If oil is discovered in the northern part of Guatemala, where explorations are under way, there will be increased Guatemalan pressure for cession of British Honduras, which would provide access to the sea. [redacted]

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